

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF VICTIM SERVICES MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

Anne Arundel County Police Department Headquarters

ATTENDEES

Board Members: Board Members: Ellen Alexander, Barbara Bond, Jessica Dickerson, Linda Fleischer, Rea Goldfinger, Kristen Mahoney, Patricia Marshall, Margery Patten, Johnny Rice, II, Sandy Roberts, Roberta Roper, Debra Tall, Deborah Unitus, Frank R. Weathersbee, Virginia Wolf, Robin Woolford and Jeanne Yeager

Staff: Shirley Haas, Anne Litecky and Nakita Long

Guests: Michael Cohen, Jane Henderson, Vivian Penda, Michelle Thompson, and Charles Whitley, III

Welcome and Introduction: Roberta Roper began the meeting at approximately 9:45 a.m.

Roberta welcomed the presenters for today's meeting, Jane Henderson, Bonita Spikes and Vivian Penda. Roberta also announced that two of the presentations for today were cancelled due to the overwhelming agenda and legislative priorities.

A request was made for Board approval for a letter of recommendation for March Family Funeral Home who is seeking OVC funding to conduct a first annual conference for families of homicide victims in Baltimore. The Board approved a motion to send a letter from the Board chair on behalf of Roberta's House Family Grief Support Center.

Review of Minutes: The minutes from the January 2010 Board meeting were disseminated and approved by the State Board.

PRESENTATIONS

Victims of Homicide: Crime Victim's Survey Report

In the 2009 legislative session a bill was proposed to abolish the death penalty. Although the proposal did not pass, legislation was approved that severely restricts the application of the death penalty in Maryland. The bill also requires GOCCP to submit a report to the General Assembly on the status of victim services for survivors of homicide. The Maryland Statistical Analysis Center developed a survey that was distributed to law enforcement agencies, State's Attorneys' Offices and victim services providers in selected jurisdictions throughout the State. Although the survey was somewhat limited, it showed a real disconnect between what service providers think and what homicide survivors think in terms of adequate resources.

Jane Henderson, MD Citizens Against State Executions, advised that the Commission, which included homicide survivors appointed by the Governor, was not unanimous on the recommendation to repeal the death penalty. However, they did agree that much more needs to be done in support of homicide survivors. The Commission made two recommendations: (1) repeal the death penalty and (2) increase statewide support to survivors of homicide victims.

Vivian Penda and Bonita Spikes, both homicide survivors, along with Jane Henderson requested that the Board explore the issue of expanded services for survivors of homicide and consider enhanced training for law enforcement officers.

Jane Henderson advised that there is a continuum of needs for homicide survivors that are not being met. She suggested creating a committee to look at what we are and are not doing for survivors and build on the Commission's initial recommendations. Shirley suggested having a separate meeting with Chief Coryell and Jane Henderson in an effort to develop a comprehensive plan for survivors of homicide services.

Roberta Roper advised that Senate Bill 820 would expand current police training requirements, which are limited exclusively to sexual assault victims, and require in-service and ongoing training for all types of victimization. Kristen Mahoney, Executive Director of GOCCP advised that Shirley Haas, Compliance Coordinator, has personally spent hundreds of hours this last year at police departments training on victims' rights. Shirley advised that she is currently doing in-service training on a routine basis through June. By that time she will have instructed almost every Baltimore City police officer. Shirley advised that she is also working with PCTC in a cooperative agreement to develop a training device that will be available to all law enforcement agencies that utilize PCTC.

Another recommendation in the report was to develop an asset map to begin to understand what is out there and who is accessing it. Jane Henderson advised she has come across programs that do not know what services other agencies provide. Kristin advised Jane that if and when she should come across any of those programs, to notify Anne Litecky who will make sure they are posted on the Maryland Community Services Locator website. The Maryland Community Services Locator website is a mapping program that provides information about the type of service you need in your area. It is in its 3rd year of operation and victim services are now included. The website is www.mdcsl.org.

Kristin also recommended having victim/witness assistance tabs placed on police departments' home page of their website.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislation

Roberta commended Barbara Bond on a job well done for coordinating all of the Legislative Bills.

State Board Legislative Policy

Roberta Roper and Anne Litecky consulted with Kristen Mahoney to determine whether the Board may take position on bills collectively as the State Board. Kristen contacted Karl Pothier, Assistant Attorney General, and was advised via email that although Mr. Pothier initially viewed this as a straight forward inquiry due to the express language in the Board's enabling statute, the Board's duties are subject to the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention's Executive Director. A 1988 Attorney General Opinion caused Mr. Pothier to review in great detail the Board's legislative history, whereby advising that he will not provide a response at this time and instead will consult with the Attorney General's Opinions Office to ensure that his advice is appropriate and correct. Mr. Pothier will try to get the advice to Kristen as soon as possible.

Kristen advised that her understanding from Mr. Pothier is that in the absence of any particular guidance, the Board should carry on as it were until the Attorney General's Office can provide us with guidance.

Criminal Procedure – Child Advocacy Centers (SB 796 / HB1043)

Senate Bill 796/House Bill 1043 appropriates money from the Maryland Victims of Crime (MVOC) Fund and requires that GOCCP annually award \$500,000 to be distributed equitably to all Child Advocacy Centers (CACs). State's Attorney Frank suggested that the Board take a position on this bill. Roberta advised that if this bill were enacted, the MVOC fund would be empty. Frank advised that the Grants Committee has a meeting on next Tuesday to approve grants for victims' services in the amount of \$325,000, subject to the final authority of Kristen. If passed, Frank advised this bill would take away the \$325,000 for first year grants plus money for 2nd and 3rd year grants that have yet to be distributed and give it to a particular class of victims. Roberta advised that fiscal reports suggest there is surplus money. Anne Litecky responded there is a \$50,000 decrease in FY 2011 1st year MVOC grants from last year.

Roberta asked Johnny Rice, DHR about existing funding for CACs and according to Johnny they fund 12 Child Advocacy Centers for over \$1million dollars. Ellen Alexander advised that OJJDP puts almost \$11 billion dollars in funds each year for CACs. Ellen also indicated that OVC allocates \$50 million of VOCA money each year specifically for child sexual assault and funding CACs.

Frank asked Kristin if she would consider testifying before legislative committees in opposition to this bill. Kristen advised that GOCCP has the responsibility to review all of the legislation as it comes through and do a thorough analysis. She further advised that the following would be reported to the bill sponsors regarding GOCCP's Victim Service's Program:

- MVOC costs have increased from 2006 to 2009;
- There has been a 25% increase in money allocated to PINS for MSBVS staff;
- There has been a 30% increase in money allocated towards annual memorial services;
- There has been a 4% increase in victim assistance awards luncheon funds
- There has been a 10% increase in the amount of funds that GOCCP has absorbed trying to keep everything level. This includes GOCCP PIN to MVOC to reduce the RESI contract administrative cost.
- From 2006 to 2009 the admin costs for MVOC has increased by 15% ;however from 2008 to 2009 due to transferring Anne Marie and other savings MVOC administration cost is down 24% and this year it is expected to be about \$340,000 in actual expenses which is about \$30,000 or 10% less in administrative costs.

Kristen advised that allocating \$500,000 annually from MVOC is clearly impossible and the only way to accomplish the objectives of Conway's bill would be to ask him to consider reducing his allocations to \$250,000. To obtain the \$250,000, Kristen suggested allocating \$181,000 from MVOC grant funding, GOCCP contributing \$52,000 and the balance of \$17,000.00 would be contributed by the MVOC fund.

State Board of Victim Service members and staff from GOCCP held a long and lively discussion about the monies in the Maryland Victims of Crime Fund and the system that has been created over the years for applicants to file grant applications for funding. This year, for example there are 36 applications totaling over 1 million dollars in requests and only \$325,000 to distribute. Unbeknown to Board members, legislation was filed that would use \$500,000 from the Fund that would be distributed to Child Advocacy Centers. Board members held an animated discussion about how this happened and that the Board was not consulted or notified. Many Board members voiced their serious concern and complete unanimous opposition to bankrupting the Fund.

After much discussion, a motion was made and seconded and the Board unanimously voted to oppose SB 796/HB 1043. The Board further directed that the Chair of the Legislative Committee, Barbara Bond and the Board Chair to draft a letter to the bill sponsors clearly explaining our position. The board letter was to very clearly express our support for Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), as well as our strong opposition

to measures that completely deplete MVOC. It would further explain that CACs, like other programs are encouraged to seek MVOC funding. Roberta also was directed to make an appointment for the Grants Committee Chair, Frank Weathersbee, and Jeanne Yeager to personally meet with Chairman Conway to clarify our position as well as the consequences of his proposed legislation. Kristen advised that she will convey to the sponsors that the Board has voted not to support SB 796/HB 1043.

Barbara and Roberta agreed to work together to write a letter on behalf of the Board opposing this bill which Frank Weathersbee and Jeanne Yeager agreed to personally deliver to the Chairman on Monday, March 8, 2010.

Ellen suggested holding each fund, VAWA, VOCA equally responsible. She further advised that language from the Office of Violence Against Women Act states that CACs and other programs and projects supporting children of sexual abuse are eligible to apply for funding under funds that come into the State each year. Kristen advised she would be happy to go back to VAWA, but she has been cautioned against taking funds from VAWA.

Roberta Roper advised that the sponsors are well intentioned and saw a great need, but they do not understand the structure or purpose of MVOC. It is bad public policy to benefit one victim program at the expense of another.

Kristen advised that the Board has an obligation to brief the sponsor(s) on what the Board can do to support CACs.

Johnny Rice stated that the DHR has taken the position to support the bill, which is based on child safety, however, he will speak with the Secretary of his agency because although the expansion of Child Advocacy Centers statewide is great, they also do not want to do anything that would harm children or any other victim population.

Kristen advised the Board members to consider doing some regional meetings and outreach, especially on the Eastern Shore, and come up with a plausible response so the bill might be withdrawn or does not get the votes. Currently, there are not enough services for child victims on the Eastern Shore.

Senate Bill 1004

Kristen advised that this bill is a Republican version of the Reconciliation Act. The bill would eliminate \$22 million in special grants that GOCCP administers, which would include the Roper Victim Assistance Academy of Maryland (RVAAM), VINE, Prince George's County Job Corp, Prince George's County Violent Crime Control Grant, CSAFE Program, War Room in Baltimore City, and the entire Baltimore City Gun Prosecution Unit of the State's Attorney's Office, etc. This Reconciliation Act, like the Administration's Reconciliation Act does not include Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) as a preserved interest fund. Robin advised that CICB is not an interest bearing account. Kristen advised that this bill will be heard at 12:30 p.m. today.

Jeanne Yeager advised she will speak with the sponsor of the bill and advise him of the impact this bill would have on programs. Kristen advised that GOCCP has a list which reflects the impact on programs.

Kristen also advised that she would have Virginia Geckler provide the Board with a list of bills that GOCCP has supported.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Memorial Services

Debra Tall, chair reminded everyone that the Maryland Regional Memorial Services would be held on Sunday, April 18, 2010 in Harford, Calvert, Montgomery and Talbot counties. Harford County will host for the Northern region. Calvert County will host for the Southern region, Montgomery County will host for the Western region and Talbot County will host for the Eastern region. Debra also advised the Board that Cecil County was moved to the Northern region this year and will be included in the Northern rotation schedule. The Memorial Service Committee has chosen the theme: "Their Light Still Shines" and a candle was the chosen design for the invitation. Invitations will be mailed within the next few weeks. A proof of the Memorial Service Invitation and Program was passed around for the Board to review.

Governor's Victim Assistance Awards Luncheon

Robin Woolford, chair had to leave early to attend legislative hearings. Anne Litecky announced that the Governor's Victim Assistance Awards Luncheon would be held on Friday, April 30, 2010 from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm at Club Meade in Fort Meade, Maryland. Tickets are \$30.00. Invitations will be mailed within the next few weeks. The Governor's Luncheon Committee meeting that was to be held today following this meeting has been cancelled and has been rescheduled for Tuesday, March 16, 2010 at Hellas Restaurant. The Luncheon Committee members will review the nominations and make recommendations for awards.

MVOC Fiscal Report

Anne Litecky advised that the MVOC Fiscal Report was emailed to Board members on February 22, 2010 and she would answer any questions.

Other Business

Roberta Roper advised that she received an email from Steve Derene, Director of National Association of VOCA Administrators announcing that there is going to be a briefing for House Staffers to the Congressional Crime Victims' Caucus regarding their efforts to get a cap on VOCA funding and they are asking organizations and groups who want to be included as co-sponsors on the briefing to let him know. Anyone who is in that position can obtain information from Roberta Roper.

Quad State Conference

Johnny Rice provided an update from the Pennsylvania Coalition about the Quad State Conference. Delaware and New Jersey have not demonstrated a commitment to participate. In conversations between Roberta Roper, Debra Stanley, Russell Butler and Johnny, it was decided that because of lack of progress 1) Maryland would not host the Conference and 2) the group would follow up with a meeting to discuss supporting some of the workshops. Johnny stated that Dr. Stanley indicated she would like to participate in meetings with the RVAAM alumni and the Association of Service Providers. The Quad State Conference may detract from this statewide training. Johnny advised that he spoke with Steve Derene and was advised that there may be certain travel restrictions and/or special conditions that OVC is likely to impose regarding the VOCA Grants Conference for the fall. Steve Derene further advised that they are having the Systems Conference and the Conversation Conference in September. Johnny stated that the multiple events we are involved in statewide would make it very difficult from a capacity perspective to give the time and effort that it takes to host the Conference. Johnny stated that the Quad State Conference

is beneficial because it allows States to mobilize around similar issues that are important, however, the downside is the travel restrictions, the logistics and the capacity.

**The next Board meeting will be held at Anne Arundel Police Department Headquarters
on
Wednesday, May 5, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.**